

# Observation Guidelines

The J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge provides a sanctuary for many species of wild animals, birds and native vegetation. Many people come to the refuge each year to observe and photograph the inhabitants of this unique ecosystem.

While the disturbance of a single visitor may be small, the cumulative impact of nearly a million people a year is large. To enhance the experience of each visitor and to reduce our impact on the wildlife, these guidelines should be followed:

 Leave nothing but footprints; take nothing but pictures. To all who take pictures, use courtesy to fellow visitors and wildlife.

 Enjoy and appreciate our native vegetation, but please leave it untouched. Plants provide food and lodging for the wildlife.

 Please place all trash and recyclables in receptacles. If you do not, wildlife could ingest or become entangled in plastic and other trash. They often become ill and die.

 Do not feed or approach the wildlife. Animals that are fed lose their fear of humans. They become dangerous and may have to be destroyed.

 Cars make good observation blinds because the wildlife have become accustomed to them. For better observation of feeding, resting, and preening birds, minimize noise by turning down radios, closing doors quietly, and speaking softly. Park at the edge of the road but not where birds are close to the road.

 Maintain a "comfort distance" from wildlife so that your presence does not alter their behavior. While wildlife may accept one observer, they will be disturbed by several people. Tell-tale signs: the bird "freezes", lifts feet, walks or flies away. Let a telephoto lens or binoculars bring you a closer image. Binoculars are loaned at information desk in education center.

 Observe all speed zones and closed areas when boating. Manatees can be injured by boat propellers and birds can be disturbed when approached too closely.

## For an enjoyable visit ...

Start your tour of the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge at the Visitor/Education Center. The staff and volunteers will orient you to the refuge. Take your binoculars, cameras, sunscreen, and water. Drive slowly, walk a trail and look closely. This will help you see animals that blend in with their surroundings. Visit the refuge during periods of low tide for the best wildlife observation opportunities. Tide changes occur on the refuge one to two hours later than times stated on island tide charts.

Sanibel was once known for its immense mosquito population. Current mosquito control practices have reduced insect populations but be prepared for mosquitoes and other biting insects.



Refuge Map

National Wildlife Refuge

J.N. "Ding" Darling

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

J.N. "Ding" Darling  
National Wildlife Refuge  
1 Wildlife Drive  
Sanibel, Florida 33957  
[www.fws.gov/dingdarling](http://www.fws.gov/dingdarling)  
239-472-1100



## The National Wildlife Refuge System...

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The System, encompassing over 150 million acres, is the nation's largest network of lands and waters managed specifically for wildlife. The refuge system is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the Department of the Interior.



This blue goose, designed by "Ding" Darling, has become a symbol of the Refuge System.



# J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge



**Wildlife Drive - CLOSED FRIDAYS**  
Motorized vehicles \$5  
Hiker/biker \$1 (Children 15 and under FREE)  
Sunrise to 1/2 hour before sunset  
Federal passes available for entrance fees only  
One-way for vehicles and bicycles  
Tram tours available (239) 472-1351

**Indigo Trail**  
Hiker/biker \$1  
Open daily sunrise to 1/2 hour before sunset  
Visit **Wildlife Education Boardwalk** along the way

**Bailey Tract**  
**Free entry**  
Open daily, sunrise to sunset  
For more information visit [www.fws.gov/dingdarling](http://www.fws.gov/dingdarling) or call (239) 472-1100. Find us on Facebook and Instagram 

**PROHIBITED REFUGE ACTIVITIES**

- Collecting
- Camping
- Feeding or disturbing wildlife
- Pets not on a leash
- Skateboarding
- Possession of unauthorized firearms
- Skating/rollerblading
- Crabbing with baited line or trap
- Entering areas that are closed to public
- Biking against traffic flow on Wildlife Drive
- Entering Wildlife Drive from Wulfert Road

**EMERGENCY CALL 911**  
**Sanibel Police Dept. (239) 472-3111**

Scale in Miles  
0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1

